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Mud-slinging in election forum

by Paul Creelman

The spring election campaign got off to a roaring start when a muck-raking debate involving questioners from the floor broke out in the Garden Tuesday at noontime. The forum for executive candidates was the second such event scheduled for the week, a previous discussion having been held in Howe Hall the previous day.

Highlights of the forum included a lengthy questioning of vice-presidential hopeful Marie Gilkinson by Scott MacLeod, the Student Union Treasurer and a member of this year's executive. Concentrating on Gilkinson's role as the chairperson of the entertainment committee, MacLeod identified problems encountered in the entertainment department this year, including a substantial loss, and asked Gilkinson to justify her role.

Gord Owen, a candidate for re-election as Council President, and a member of this year's executive, also came under attack from Peter Rans, grad rep on Council. Identifying communications with the student body as a problem in the present Council, Rans asked Owen to account for his poor track record in this issue, since it was also the campaign platform of last year's executive. Pointing out that Council had appointed an Ad-Hoc Communications Committee, of whom Rans himself was the chairperson, Owen said that he had made efforts to solve this problem.

Grad rep and presidential candidate Greg Graham, who came under the least attack from the floor during the

debate, shared the hot seat with the presidential team of Kelly and Dunn as well as the Owen and Lamontagne team when an unidentified questioner from the floor tried to get specific commitments on the issue of tuition fee hikes.

The team of Logan and Logan did not show up for the debate.

Umesh Jain, the chief electoral officer and moderator of the debate, states that there was not enough debate on the issues during the forum, and future forums will be panel discussions to encourage debate on the issues themselves.

"The mud-slinging was inevitable," said Jain. "The candidates who are running are so completely opposite to one another. At Howe Hall it was subdued, but today's forum was an out and out 'let's drag someone through the mud.'" Some of the questions were stacked. I mean, I can almost guarantee candidates had asked people to ask certain questions."

Jain hopes that the panel type discussion, which will involve two students from inside the Student Union Building, and two external panelists, will help to limit debate to the issues in this election.

The executive candidates themselves expressed disappointment at the personal tack which the debate seems to have taken. Greg Graham, the presidential candidate of the Graham-Gilkinson team, said that he was getting upset over many of the things being said, and that the attacks in the debate had taken on a 'stomach-turning dimension.

Graham especially objected to

Scott MacLeod's questioning of Marie Gilkinson, and pointed out that Gord Owen and Marie Gilkinson seemed to be getting the worst of the debate because of their involvement in Council activities.

Gord Owen echoed the thoughts of Graham, stating that the elections here at Dalhousie were far worse than the elections which had recently taken place at St. Mary's University. Owen also felt that Gilkinson and himself had been getting the worst of the mud-slinging, and that it was very important the elections focus right on the issues at hand.

"If I go out and campaign on an issue and get a lot of negative feedback from the people during these forums, then I'm hardly likely to put that policy into effect", said Owen.

"This sort of feedback from the students is really important, one of the most important parts of the campaign." Owen adds that all the candidates will benefit from concentration on the issues.

Dan Kelly, member of the Dunn-Kelly presidential team, however, feels that at least some of the questions on candidates background were necessary to inform the students. Saying that the jobs done by Owen and Gilkinson in the past are fair game for attack, Kelly said that the students should be informed of these facts. However, pointing out that many of the questioners on the floor have been the same people at the two different forums, Kelly believes that dwelling on some questions doesn't emphasize the more important issues.



Higgins/Dal Photo

Pissed off? You bet! for details see page 19.

Dal athletes bring home 19 AUAA honours

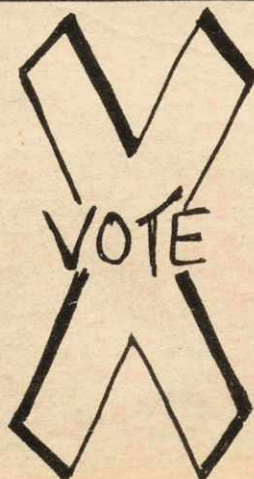
It was quite a week for the Dal athletes during the study break. Four AUAA titles came to Dal, four athletes were outstanding AUAA competitors in their sports, ten Tigers were named to various all-star teams, and three coaches were named coaches of the year. Exciting details of these and other sports stories on page 19 .

Promises, promises . . .

See the special election supplement for:

- News and views of the candidates
- CKDU referendum report
- Commentaries, editorials, photos, cartoons and more.

Pages 7 to 16.



**Join
the celebration!**

*Women march in solidarity
on March 7.*

More information page 3.